

## Message Text

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ACTION VO-03

INFO OCT-01 AF-05 ARA-16 EA-07 ISO-00 SCA-01 INSE-00 MMS-04

/037 W

----- 081764

P R 221911Z JUL 74

FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3899

INFO AMCONSUL CALI

AMCONSUL MEDELLIN

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE

AMEMBASSY QUITO

RUES AD/AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO 268

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EO 11652: NA

TAGS: CVIS CO

SUBJ: INVALIDATION OF PRE-COUNTERFOIL NIVS

REF: STATE 003903, 044741 AND 151701

1. SUMMARY. WHILE EMBASSY IS SYMPATHETIC TO THE THEORY OF THE INVALIDATION PROGRAM, IT IS NOT CLEAR TO US THAT ITS COST-BENEFIT RATIO IS FAVORABLE. ALTHOUGH THE PROGRAM SHOULD IMMEDIATELY INCREASE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE COUNTERFOILS, WE ARE UNSURE OF ITS EVENTUAL TOTAL IMPACT ON COUNTERFEITING EFFORTS. IMPLEMENTATION OF AN INVALIDATION PROGRAM WOULD, IN OUR JUDGMENT, RESULT IN SIGNIFICANT ADVERSE PUBLIC AND GOVERNMENTAL REACTION (ESPECIALLY WITH A NEW GOVERNMENT TAKING OFFICE IN AUGUST), AND AN EROSION IN FRIENDLY RELATIONS AND FEELINGS TOWARD THE US. WE ALSO SEE NO WAY OF AVOIDING SIGNIFICANT INCONVENIENCE TO HOLDERS OF STILL VALID VISAS, AND SINCE THE BULK OF THESE ARE PRECISELY FROM LEADERSHIP ELEMENTS OF SOCIETY -- CIVIC LEADERS, REPUTABLE BUSINESSMEN, GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, AND WELL-ESTABLISHED PERSONS IN SOCIETY -- THE

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IRRITATION AND REACTION WILL BE VOCAL AND EFFECTIVE. WE ALSO

ESTIMATE THAT THE WORK LOAD WOULD BE HEAVY AND WE COULD NOT UNDERTAKE THE PROGRAM WITHOUT AN INCREASE IN MANPOWER AT ALL THREE POSTS IN COLOMBIA (SEE PARA 5 BELOW). WE ALSO DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THE PROGRAM SHOULD BE INSTITUTED IN COLOMBIA UNLESS IT IS ALSO INSTITUTED IN ALL OTHER COUNTRIES HAVING THE COUNTERFOIL PROGRAM, SO THAT WE WILL HAVE A STRONGER EXPLANATION FOR OUR ACTIONS FOR GOC OFFICIALS. IF THE INVALIDATION PROGRAM IS TO BE PUT INTO EFFECT, WE BELIEVE WE SHOULD BE PROVIDED A) WITH A REASONABLE PERIOD WITHIN WHICH REPLACEMENT VISAS CAN BE ISSUED; B) SUFFICIENT LEAD TIME BEFORE BEGINNING THE PROGRAM TO PERMIT US TO RECEIVE THE ADDITIONAL PERSONNEL REQUIRED AND TRAIN LOCALS; AND C) AN OPPORTUNITY TO CONSULT BEFOREHAND WITH GOC OFFICIALS TO MAKE A FINAL ASSESSMENT OF THE POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES BEFORE WE ACTUALLY PROCEED. END SUMMARY.

2. INVALIDATING ALL NIVS ISSUED PRIOR TO 2/20/74 SHOULD MAXIMIZE EFFECTIVENESS OF COUNTERFOILS. WHAT THE EVENTUAL AND OVERALL IMPACT WOULD BE ON COUNTERFEITING EFFORTS, HOWEVER, IS UNCERTAIN. WE SHOULD POINT OUT THAT IF COUNTERFEITERS ARE NOW PRE-DATING VISAS TO AVOID COUNTERFOIL REQUIREMENT, IT MUST BE ASSUMED THAT FALSE VISAS COULD ALSO BE PRESENTED TO THE CONSULATES FOR REVALIDATION. EFFORTS TO DETERMINE IF THE VISAS BEING PRESENTED FOR REPLACEMENT ARE VALID WILL OBVIOUSLY BE DIFFICULT AND PROPORTIONATELY INCREASE THE WORK LOAD. AS THE DEPT KNOWS COLOMBIAN COUNTERFEITERS ARE HIGHLY COMPETENT AND THUS FAR HAVE MANAGED TO REPRODUCE SUCCESSFULLY IN A RELATIVELY SHORT PERIOD OF TIME EVERY DEVICE DESIGNED TO FOIL THEIR AIMS.

3. FOLLOWING ARE NIV ISSUANCE FIGURES SINCE JANUARY 1971:

JAN 71-JUNE 71 BOGOTA 9,347 CALI 3,963 MEDELLIN 2,173  
FY 72 BOGOTA 26,470 CALI 10,071 MEDELLIN 5,454  
FY 73 BOGOTA 31,168 CALI 12,377 MEDELLIN 6,397  
JULY 1-FEB 20, 74 BOGOTA 13,662 CALI 5,334 MEDELLIN 4,062  
TOTALS BOGOTA 80,647 CALI 31,745 MEDELLIN 18,086

OF THE COUNTRY-WIDE GRAND TOTAL OF 130,478 VISAS, WE ESTIMATE THAT APPROX 60 PERCENT OR 78,286 ARE 4-YEAR MULTIPLE ENTRY VISAS AND, THEREFORE, WOULD BE AFFECTED BY THE INVALIDATION OF ALL VISAS ISSUED PRIOR TO 2/20/74.

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4. IF THE REVALIDATION PROGRAM IS IMPLEMENTED, WE ESTIMATE THAT THE NUMBER OF VISAS ISSUED AT ALL POSTS IN COLOMBIA WOULD BE AT LEAST DOUBLE AND POSSIBLY TRIPLE FOR FY 75. SINCE MOST COLOMBIANS WHO HOLD 4-YEAR MULTIPLE ENTRY VISAS ARE VERY CONSCIENTIOUS ABOUT KEEPING THEM VALID, IT CAN BE TAKEN AS GIVEN THAT VIRTUALLY ALL BEARERS OF SUCH VISAS, WHETHER THEY ARE PLANNING TO TRAVEL TO THE US IN THE NEAR FUTURE OR NOT, WOULD

WISH TO HAVE THEIR VISAS REVALIDATED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. NO  
ADVICE BY US TO THE CONTRARY WILL HAVE ANY EFFECT.

5. THE WORKLOAD WILL OBVIOUSLY DEPEND ON THE TIME-FRAME IN  
WHICH THE DEPT EXPECTS TO ACCOMPLISH THIS PROGRAM. THE LONGER  
THE TIME PERIOD IN WHICH REPLACEMENTS CAN BE SOUGHT BEFORE THE  
INVALIDATIONS BECOMES FINALLY EFFECTIVE THE LESS THE CRUSH OF  
APPLICANTS APPLYING FOR REVALIDATION, BUT ALSO THE GREATER THE  
REDUCTION IN THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROGRAM. ASSUMING THAT  
THE PROGRAM WOULD BE ACCOMPLISHED IN A PERIOD OF SIX MONTHS,  
WE ESTIMATE THAT THE COMPLEMENT FOR COLOMBIA WOULD HAVE TO BE  
INCREASED TEMPORARILY BY A MINIMUM OF THREE AMERICAN CONSULAR  
OFFICERS (ONE EACH IN BOGOTA, CALI AND MEDELLIN) AND THE LOCAL  
COMPLEMENT INCREASED BY A MINIMUM OF SIX (TWO EACH IN BOGOTA,  
CALI AND MEDELLIN), AT A TOTAL SALARY COST IN EXCESS OF \$30,000.  
THE CONSULATES IN MEDELLIN AND CALI WOULD FACE A SPACE PROBLEM  
IN THEIR WAITING ROOMS; THE EMBASSY WOULD FACE A SPACE PROBLEM  
IN ITS WAITING ROOM AND IN ITS FILE ROOM. ADDITIONALLY, WE  
BELIEVE IT WOULD BE ESSENTIAL TO INSTALL THE ELECTRONIC NAMECHECK

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SYSTEM TO FACILITATE THE CARRYING OUT OF THIS PROGRAM.

6. WITH REFERENCE TO STAFF LEVELS, IT IS ESSENTIAL TO POINT OUT THAT CONSULAR OFFICERS HAVE POSTPONED LEAVE OVER PAST YEAR BECAUSE OF WORKLOAD UNTIL FALL AND WINTER MONTHS. (PRESUMABLY THE REVALIDATION PROGRAM WOULD BE EFFECTED DURING THIS PERIOD.) IN BOGOTA ALONE, THREE OFFICERS ARE PLANNING ANNUAL LEAVE IN SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER, AND ANOTHER OFFICER WILL BE ON HOME LEAVE DURING OCTOBER AND PART OF NOVEMBER. WHILE ANNUAL LEAVE ORDINARILY WOULD NOT BE AN IMPORTANT CONSIDERATION, AT THIS POST WHERE THE MAJORITY OF CONSULAR OFFICERS HAVE NOT TAKEN MORE THAN A WEEK IN TOTAL LEAVE DURING THE PAST YEAR, IT'S VALUE IS NECESSARILY INFLATED.

7. THE PUBLIC AND THE HOST GOVERNMENT WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY RESENT THIS NEW REQUIREMENT. DURING THE PAST SIX MONTHS, THE EMBASSY HAS ATTEMPTED VIA RADIO, TELEVISION AND NEWSPAPER COVERAGE TO INFORM COLOMBIANS OF THE EXISTING FRAUD PROBLEM AND THE RESULTANT NECESSITY OF BEING ESPECIALLY VIGILANT IN ENFORCING VISA REQUIREMENTS IN COLOMBIA. HOWEVER, THE COMBINATION OF THE FRAUD LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SUPPRESSION PROGRAM AND AN AVERAGE 45 PERCENT REFUSAL RATE IN BOGOTA HAVE RESULTED IN A SUBSTANTIAL AMOUNT OF ADVERSE PUBLICITY REGARDING THE DIFFICULTIES IN OBTAINING NONIMMIGRANT VISAS. THIS SENSITIVITY, PLUS THE FACT THAT THE PROPOSED INVALIDATION OF NONIMMIGRANT VISAS WOULD APPLY TO ONLY FIVE OTHER COUNTRIES IN THE WORLD BESIDES COLOMBIA, WILL UNDOUBTEDLY CREATE A NEGATIVE REACTION. SIGNIFICANT EROSION IN COLOMBIAN FEELINGS AND FRIENDLY PERCEPTION OF THE US CAN BE EXPECTED. THIS IS ESPECIALLY TRUE SINCE, AT LEAST IN THE RECENT PAST, ONLY APPLICANTS WHO APPEARED TO BE WELL QUALIFIED WERE ISSUED 4-YEAR MULTIPLE VISAS. THE MAJORITY OF THESE ARE GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, REPUTABLE BUSINESSMEN, INFLUENTIAL MEMBERS OF THE COLOMBIAN SOCIETY AND OTHER WELL-ESTABLISHED PERSONS.

8. DESPITE THE MASSIVE PUBLICITY PROGRAM THAT WOULD BE MOUNTED, WE CAN ALSO FORESEE MISUNDERSTANDINGS, ESPECIALLY OCCASIONS WHERE THE ALIEN WOULD BE UNAWARE OF THIS NEW REQUIREMENT, PARTICULARLY IN THE CASE OF COLOMBIAN NATIONALS RESIDING IN A THIRD COUNTRY. HENCE A FLEXIBLE ATTITUDE ON THE PART OF THE IMMIGRATION SERVICE WITH REGARD TO WAIVING THE COUNTERFOIL REQUIREMENT WILL BE NECESSARY TO AVOID MAJOR INCIDENTS AND DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATIONS.

9. ANOTHER IMPORTANT CONSIDERATION IS THAT A NEW GOVERNMENT WILL TAKE OFFICE ON AUGUST 7 AND THIS MAKES IT MORE DIFFICULT TO ASSESS THE REACTION OF GOC OFFICIALS SINCE AT THIS TIME IT IS UNKNOWN WHO WILL FILL THE POSITIONS OF FOREIGN MINISTER AND OTHER KEY POSTS.

10. IN SUM, IT IS NOT CLEAR TO US THAT THE COST-BENEFIT RATION  
OF AN INVALIDATION PROGRAM IS FAVORABLE. IN ANY CASE WE WISH  
TO REEMPHASIZE THAT WE COULD NOT IMPLEMENT SUCH A PROGRAM IN  
COLOMBIA WITHOUT AN INCREASE IN STAFF. WE ALSO BELIEVE THAT IT  
SHOULD NOT BE INSTITUTED IN COLOMBIA IF IT IS NOT ALSO TO BE  
BE INSTITUTED IN ALL OTHER COUNTRIES PARTICIPATING IN THE  
COUNTERFOIL SYSTEM. BEING ABLE TO EXPLAIN THAT THIS IS A WORLD-  
WIDE EFFORT IN A NUMBER OF COUNTRIES HAVING THE TECHNICAL  
PROBLEM OF COUNTERFOILS AND FRAUDULENT PRE-DATED VISAS WILL GIVE  
US A BETTER CHANCE TO OBTAIN COMPREHENSION OF GOC OFFICIALS AND  
LESSEN THE IRRITATION. IF THE DEPARTMENT DECIDES TO INSTITUTE  
THIS PROGRAM WE WOULD WISH TO CONSULT WITH APPROPRIATE GOC  
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OFFICIALS IN ORDER TO GAIN A DEFINITIVE ASSESSMENT OF THE  
POLITICAL PROBLEMS AND THUS MAKE A FINAL JUDGMENT OF THE  
POLITICAL FEASIBILITIES BEFORE PROCEEDING.  
VAKY

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## Message Attributes

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**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
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**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
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**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** boyleja  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
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